I talked with many officers and soldiers who participated in that operation but I could not get a clear picture of what happened. The sight of panic-stricken, fleeing troops is always ugly and humiliating. Divisions, regiments, even single companies, lose contact with one another and with the central command. Each unit feels abandoned and surrounded by the enemy. Officers and soldiers alike become victims of rumors and often of hallucinations. When a unit sees or hears that another unit is withdrawing, it likewise seeks safety in retreat. But not all the men who roll back without an order from the central command can be branded as cowards and deserters. More often than not, retreats are ordered by local commanders who realize—or believe—that their men are on the verge of a breakdown. Such orders may be issued prematurely, but military people make a distinction between such ordered retreat and flight from the battlefield. Not every case of confusion in a retreating army is an act of treason.

General Kornilov, however, unable to stop the retreating troops, opened a barrage of reports to the nation, picturing events at the front in the darkest colors, accusing soldiers of treason and cowardice, denouncing the revolution and the new order in the army as the causes of the disaster, and demanding drastic measures to restore order and discipline. And so he emerged as a hero on a white horse.

In this new campaign Kornilov was supported by the high brass in Mogilev and by Savinkov, then Commissar of the Seventh Army—a man destined to play an important role in later events. Savinkov was a strange person. A former S-R, a member of a terrorist organization, he had begun his revolutionary apprenticeship under the famous police *provocateur*, Azev, leader of a terrorist group of the party. To maintain his prestige in both the party and the police, Azev used to carry through some terrorist plans and frustrate others by reporting them to the police. To play this two-faced game he needed people who were blindly devoted to him and at the same time were respected by their companions. He picked Savinkov for this role and used him for the terrorist plans that were to be carried out.

Thus Savinkov became a successful political gunman. After Azev was exposed, Savinkov abandoned politics, became a fiction writer, and enriched Russian literature with a couple of sensational novels—a mixture of pulp-magazine technique with revolutionary yarns and a cheap imitation of Dostoevsky generously spiced with eroticism imported from France. I cannot say how it happened that a man with such a background could have been appointed a commissar of the army. But there he was, emerging from nowhere as a former revolutionary, holding the stirrup of the general on the white horse.

General Kornilov's telegrams attracted national attention that his military talents had not earned. On July 20, Kerensky, as Minister of